[*OC* IV, 1133]

LETTER TO M. DE FRANQUIÈRES

Here it is, Sir, this wretched chatter for which my humbled amour propre made you wait such a long time, because I failed to sense that a much nobler amour propre should have taught me to overcome the first. It does not much matter that my rambling might strike you as wretched, so long as I am satisfied with the sentiment which dictated it to me. As soon as my improved state restored some of my strength, I took the occasion to re-read and send it to you. If you have the courage to go on to the end, I ask you to be so kind and return it to me, without telling me anything of what you may have thought about it, and which I understand in any event. I greet you, Sir, and embrace you wholeheartedly.

Renou

Monquin, 25 March 1769

Bourgoin, 15 January 1769

[1] I feel, Sir, how useless it is for me to fulfill the duty of answering your latest letter: but after all it is a duty you impose on me, and I fulfill it readily though poorly, given the distractions of my present state.

[2] My aim in here telling you my opinion about the principal points raised by your letter is to tell it to you plainly, and without trying to make you adopt it. To try to make you do so would be at odds with my principles and even my taste. For I am just, and I no more try to subjugate others than I like to have anyone try to subjugate me. I know that the common reason is very limited, [*1134*] that as soon as one goes beyond its narrow bounds everyone has his own which suits only himself, that opinions are propagated by opinions [and] not by reason, and that anyone who yields to another's reasoning, which is already rare enough, yields by prejudice, by authority, by affection, by laziness; rarely, perhaps never, by his own judgment.

[3] You inform me, Sir, that the outcome of your inquiries about the author of things is a state of doubt. I cannot judge of

this state, because it has never been mine. I believed in childhood by authority, in youth by sentiment, in my mature years by reason; now I believe because I always believed. While my faded memory no longer puts me back on the track of my reasonings, while my weakened judgment keeps me from beginning them all over again, the opinions to which they led stay with me in all their force, and although I have neither the will nor the courage to re-examine them, I continue to hold them in confidence and in conscience, certain that I devoted to their discussion all the attention and good faith of which I was capable [at a time] when my judgment was at its most vigorous. If I erred it is not my fault, it is the fault of nature, which did not grant my head a greater share of intelligence and reason. I have no more of them now, I have much less. On what basis, then, would I begin to deliberate all over again? Time grows short; departure draws near. I would never have time or strength enough to complete the great labor of a reconsideration. Allow me in any event to depart with the consistency and steadiness of a man, not the discouraging and timid doubts of a dotty driveller.

[4] From what I can recall of my old ideas, from what I can tell about how yours proceed, I can see that since we did not follow the same road in our inquiries, it is not surprising that we should not have reached the same conclusion. In balancing the proofs of the existence of God against the difficulties, you have not found either side outweighing the other sufficiently to reach a decision, and have remained in doubt. That is not how I went about it. I examined all the systems about the formation of the universe about which I could find out, I meditated about those I could imagine. I compared them all as [*1135*] best I could: and decided, not in favor of the one that presented me with no difficulties, for they all presented me with some; but in favor of the one that seemed to me to have the fewest. I told myself that these difficulties were in the nature of the thing, that the contemplation of the infinite would always exceed the limits of my understanding, that since I should never hope fully to conceive the system of nature, all I could do was to consider it from the sides I could grasp, that one had to know how to leave all the rest in peace, and I admit that in these inquiries I was thinking like the people about whom you speak, who do not reject a clear or

sufficiently demonstrated proof because of the attendant unsolvable difficulties. I admit that at the time I was so rashly confident, or at least so strongly persuaded, that I would have dared any philosopher to propose any other intelligible system about nature, to which I could not have opposed more forceful, more irresistible objections than those he could have opposed to mine, and I therefore had to resolve to be left not believing anything as you do, which did not depend on myself, or to reason badly, or to believe as I did.

[5] An idea that came to me thirty years ago contributed perhaps more than any other to make me unshakable. Let us assume, I said to myself, mankind having grown old until now in the most complete materialism, without ever any idea of divinity or of souls ever having entered a single human mind. Let us assume that philosophical atheism had exhausted all of its systems [in the effort] to explain the formation and the working of the universe exclusively by the interplay of matter and of necessary motion, an expression of which, by the way, I have never made any sense. I further assumed, excuse my candor, Sir, that what I have always seen would obtain in this state: that the restless partisans of these systems, instead of remaining quietly satisfied in them as in the lap of truth, constantly wanted to talk about their doctrine, to elucidate it, to expand it, to explain it, to qualify it, to correct it and, like someone who feels his house shaking under his feet, to bolster it with new arguments. Let us finally put an end to these assumptions with the assumption of a Plato, a Clarke, suddenly arising among them and telling them: my friends, if you had begun the analysis of this [*1136*] universe with the analysis of yourselves, you would have found in the nature of your being the key to the constitution of this very universe, which otherwise you seek in vain. That thereupon explaining the distinction between the two substances to them, he would have proven to them by the very properties of matter that, regardless of what Locke may say on the subject, the assumption of thinking matter is a genuine absurdity. That he would have shown them the nature of the truly active and thinking being, and that once this judging being had been established, he would finally have ascended from it to the confused but certain notions of the supreme being: who can doubt that, struck by the brilliance, the simplicity, the truth, the beauty

of this ravishing idea, mortals, who had been blind up to then, illumined by the first rays of the divinity, would have offered it their first homage by acclamation, and that above all the thinkers and the philosophers would have blushed at having contemplated the outside of this immense machine for such a long time, without finding, without even suspecting the key to its constitution and, forever crudely limited to their senses, at never having been able to see anything but matter where everything showed them that another substance gave life to the universe and intelligence to man. Under these circumstances, Sir, it is this new philosophy that would have been fashionable; young people and the wise would have found themselves in agreement; a doctrine so beautiful, so sublime, so sweet and so consoling to any just man would really have aroused all men to virtue, and this fair word *humanity*, nowadays hackneyed by the least humane people in the world to the point of becoming dull, ridiculous, would have been stamped in men's hearts better than in books. So that all it would have taken is a simple shift in time for philosophical fashion to be the very opposite of what it is, with this difference, that the current philosophical fashion, for all of its ostentatious verbiage, does not hold out the promise of a particularly estimable generation [of young people], or of particularly virtuous philosophers.

[6] You object, Sir, that if God had wanted to obligate men to know him, he would have made his existence evident to all eyes. It is up to those who make of faith in God a dogma necessary for salvation to reply to this objection, and they reply to it with revelation. As for myself, who believe in God without believing this faith to be necessary, I do not see why God would have obligated himself [*1137*] to give it to us. I believe that everyone will be judged not by what he believed, but by what he did, and I do not believe that a system of doctrine is necessary for works, because conscience takes its place.

[7] I do believe, it is true, that one has to be in good faith in one's belief, and not turn it into a system favoring our passions. Since we are not all intelligence, we cannot philosophize so disinterestedly that our will does not influence our opinions somewhat; one can often ascertain a man's secret inclinations by his purely speculative sentiments; and, on this assumption, I think

that it might well be the case that someone who did not want to believe might be punished for not having believed.

[8] However, I believe that God revealed himself sufficiently to men both in his works and in their hearts, and if there are any who do not know him, it is, in my view, because they do not want to know him, or because they have no need of it.

[9] The latter case is that of man, savage and without culture, who has not yet made any use of his reason, who, being governed solely by his appetites, needs no other guide, and following only the instinct of nature, always proceeds in an upright fashion. This [savage] man does not know God, but does not offend him. The former case, by contrast, is that of the philosopher who by dint of trying to exalt his intelligence, to refine, to subtilize what has been thought prior to him, ends up undermining all the axioms of simple and original reason, and who, because he is forever trying to know more and better than everyone else, succeeds in not knowing anything at all. The man who is both reasonable and modest, whose developed but restricted understanding feels its limits and confines itself to them, finds within these limits the notion of his soul and that of the author of his being without being able to go beyond [them] to clarify these notions and to contemplate each as closely as if he himself were a pure spirit. Whereupon, overcome by respect, he stops, and does not touch the veil, satisfied with knowing that the immense Being is underneath. This is how far it is useful to practice philosophy. The rest is nothing more than idle speculation for which man was not made, from which the moderate reasoner refrains, and in which vulgar man does not engage. This [reasonable and modest] man who is neither brute nor prodigy is man properly so called, the mean between [*1138*] the two extremes, and who makes up the nineteen twentieths of human Kind. It is up to this numerous class to sing the Psalm *Coeli enarrant*; and it is indeed this class which sings it. All peoples on earth know and adore God, and although each dresses him in its fashion, yet under all these different garbs one always finds God. The small elite who have higher doctrinal aspirations, and whose genius is not limited to common sense, want a more transcendent one: for which I do not blame them; but when from this they go on to put themselves in the place of human kind and to say that God has hidden himself from men because the

small number no longer see him, I find that they are wrong in this. It can happen, I grant, that the sweep of fashion and the workings of intrigue expand the philosophical sect and for a moment persuade the many that they no longer believe in God: but this passing fashion cannot last, and regardless of how one goes about it, in the long run man will always have to have a God. Finally, if by forcing the nature of things the Divinity became more evident to us, I have no doubt that in the new Lyceum they would become proportionately more subtle in denying it. In the long run reason assumes the bend the heart gives it, and when one wants to think differently from the people about everything, one sooner or later manages to do so.

[10] None of this strikes you, Sir, as particularly philosophic, any more than it does me; but ever in good faith with myself I feel my reasonings, simple though they are, combining with the weight of internal assent. According to you one should be suspicious of it; I cannot share your view on this point, and I find, on the contrary, that this internal judgment is a natural safeguard against the sophisms of my reason. I am even afraid that on this occasion you mistake the secret inclinations of our heart which lead us astray for this still more secret, more internal dictamen, which protests and grumbles against these [self-]interested decisions, and in spite of ourselves sets us back on the road toward truth. This internal sentiment is the sentiment of nature itself, it is a call by it against all the sophisms of reason, and the proof of it is that it never speaks more forcefully than when our will yields most readily to the judgments which the internal sentiment persists in rejecting. Far from believing that whoever judges according to it is liable to [*1139*] err, I believe [rather] that it never misleads us and that it is the light of our feeble understanding, when we try to go beyond what we are capable of conceiving.

[11] And, after all, how often is not philosophy itself, for all its pride, forced to have recourse to this internal judgment which it pretends to despise? Was it not it alone that made Diogenes walk as his only reply to Zeno who denied motion? Was it not with it that the whole of ancient philosophy answered the skeptics? We need not go that far back; while all modern philosophy rejects spirits, suddenly Bishop Berkeley rises and maintains that there

are no bodies. How did they succeed in refuting this terrible logician? Do away with the internal sentiment, and I defy all modern philosophers combined to prove to Berkeley that there are bodies. Dear young man, who seem to me to be so well born, be in good faith, I implore you, and allow me here to refer you to an author you will not find suspect, the author of the *Pensées philosophiques*. If someone were to tell you that, having thrown down a great many letters at random, he saw the *Aeneid* fully ordered result from this throw: grant that instead of going out to verify this wonder, you will answer him coldly: Sir, this is not impossible; but you lie. By virtue of what, I ask you, do you answer him this way?

[12] Ah, who does not know that without the internal sentiment there would soon not be a trace of truth left on earth, that we would all be tossed about successively by the most monstrous opinions, as those propounding them have more genius, skill and wit, and that at last, reduced to blush of our very reason, we would end up at a loss to know what to believe or think.

[13] But the objections ... No doubt there are some we are incapable of solving, and indeed there are many of them, I know. But, once again, give me a system without any, or tell me how I am to decide. What is more; by the nature of my system, provided my direct proofs are well established, the difficulties should not stop me, in view of the impossibility for me, who am a composite being, to reason with precision about pure spirits, and to observe their nature sufficiently [adequately]. But you materialists who speak to me [*1140*] of a single substance, tangible, and subject by its nature to inspection by the senses, you are obliged not only to tell me nothing but what is clear, adequately demonstrated, but also to resolve all my difficulties in a fully satisfactory fashion, because both you and I are in possession of all the instruments needed for this solution. And, for example, when you have thought arise from combinations of matter, you must make these combinations and their result perceptible to me by the laws of physics and mechanics alone since you allow for no others. You Epicurean, you make up the soul out of subtle atoms. But what, pray, do you call *subtle*? You are aware that we know no absolute dimensions, and that nothing is small or large except relatively to the eye looking at it. I assume

I take a sufficiently powerful microscope and look at one of your atoms. I see a big chunk of hooked rock. I am waiting to see thought result from the swirling and linking up with one another of such chunks. You Modernist, you show me an organic molecule: I take my microscope, and I see a dragon as large as half my room; I wait to see such dragons mould and twist themselves until I see resulting from all this a being that is not only organized but intelligent; that is to say a being that is not an aggregate but is strictly one, etc. You told me, Sir, that the world had arranged itself fortuitously, the way the Roman Republic had done. For the analogy not to limp, the Roman Republic would have to have been made up not of men but of pieces of wood. Show me clearly and in a way perceptible to the senses the purely material generation of the first intelligent being, I ask nothing more of you.

[14] But if everything is the work of an intelligent, powerful, beneficent being, where does the evil on earth come from? I admit to you that this terrible difficulty never greatly struck me, either because I had not understood it adequately, or because it is indeed not as solid as it appears to be. Our philosophers have risen in protest against metaphysical entities, yet I know no one who makes up so many of them. What do they understand by *evil*? what is *evil* in itself? where is *evil* in relation to nature and its author? The universe subsists, order prevails and [*1141*] endures in it; everything in it successively perishes, because such is the law of material and moved beings; but everything in it renews itself and nothing in it degenerates, because such is the order of its author, and this order cannot be denied. I see nothing evil in all this. But when I suffer, is that not an evil? When I die, is that not an evil? Gently: I am subject to death because I received life; there was but one way for me never to die, which was never to have been born. Life is a positive but finite good whose term is called death. The term of the positive is not the negative, it is zero. Death seems terrible to us, and we call this terror an evil. Pain is another evil for the one who suffers, I grant it. But pain and pleasure were the only means by which to attach a sentient and perishable being to his self-preservation, and these means are managed with a goodness worthy of the supreme Being. At the very moment of writing this, I once again experienced how much the cessation of an acute pain is a lively and delicious pleasure. Would anyone dare tell me that

the cessation of the most lively pleasure is an acute pain? The sweet enjoyment of life is permanent; all that is required to savor it is not to be suffering. Pain is but a warning, importunate but necessary, that this good which is so dear to us is in danger. When I examined all this closely, I found, perhaps I proved, that the sentiment of death and that of pain are almost nil in the order of nature. It is men who have given it a sharp edge. Without their senseless refinements, without their barbarous institutions, physical evils would hardly reach or affect us, and we would not feel death.

[15] But moral evil! another work of man in which God has no other share than to have made him free and like himself in this respect. Will God then have to be blamed for men's crimes and the evils which they visit upon them? Will he have to be reproved, at the sight of a battlefield, for having created so many broken arms and legs?

[16] Why, you will say, have made man free, since he was bound to abuse his freedom? Ah! M. de Franquières, if ever a mortal existed who did not abuse it, this mortal alone honors humanity more than all the scoundrels who cover the earth degrade it. My God: give me virtues, and some day place me next to [*1142*] the likes of Fénelon, of Cato, of Socrates. What will the rest of mankind matter to me? I will not blush to have been a man.

[17] I told you, Sir, that what is at issue here is my sentiment, not my proofs, as you all too readily see. I recall formerly meeting up on my way with this question of the origin of evil and touching on it; but you have not read these harpings, and I have forgotten them: we have both done well. All I know is that I found it so easy to resolve them because of the opinion I always held regarding the eternal coexistence of two principles, one active which is God, the other passive, which is matter [and] which the active being has full power to combine and to modify, but did not create and has not the power to annihilate. This opinion has led to my being booed by the philosophers to whom I told it; they decided that it was absurd and contradictory. It may be, but it did not seem to me to be so, and I found that it had the advantage of explaining effortlessly and clearly to my satisfaction so many questions in which they get caught up; among others the one you here presented to me as insoluble.

[18] Besides, I dare believe that while my sentiment may not carry much weight in any other matter, it must carry some in this matter, and once you are better acquainted with my fate, you will perhaps some day say in thinking of me: has anyone else the right to enlarge the range he found of the evils man suffers here below.

[19] You attribute to the difficulty of this very question – of which fanaticism and superstition have taken advantage – the evils which religions have caused on earth. That may be so, and I even admit to you that all formulae in matters of faith seem to me to be so many chains of iniquity, falsity, hypocrisy and tyranny. But let us beware of being unjust, and not eliminate the good for the sake of magnifying the evil. To wrest all belief in God from men's heart is to destroy all virtue in it. That is my opinion, Sir, perhaps it is wrong, but so long as I hold it I will not be so cowardly as to hide it from you.

[20] To do good is a well-born man's sweetest occupation. His probity, his beneficence are not the work of his principles, but of his good nature. He yields to his inclinations in practicing justice, as the [*1143*] wicked man yields to his inclination in practicing iniquity. To satisfy the taste that inclines us to do good is goodness, but not virtue.

[21] This word virtue means *force*. There is no virtue without struggle, there is none without victory. Virtue consists not only in being just, but in being so by triumphing over one's passions, by ruling over one's own heart. Titus, making the Roman people happy, everywhere spreading gifts and benefits, might not waste a single day, and yet not be virtuous; he certainly was so in sending back Berenice. Brutus causing his children to be put to death may have been more than just. But Brutus was a tender father; to do his duty he tore up his insides, and Brutus was virtuous.

[22] Here you already see the question brought back to the main point. This divine simulacrum about which you tell me, shows itself to me as a not ignoble image, and I believe that I feel the warmth which this image is capable of generating from the impression which it makes on my heart. But in the final analysis this simulacrum is still nothing but one of those metaphysical entities which you do not want men to turn into their Gods. It is a pure object of contemplation. How far do you take the effect of this sublime contemplation? If all you want is to derive from it

further encouragement to do the right thing, I agree with you: but that is not the issue. Let us assume your honest heart a prey to the most terrible passions, which you cannot escape because, after all, you are a man. Will this image, which shows itself so ravishing in your heart when it is calm, lose none of its charms and not get tarnished amidst the torrents [of these passions]? Let us set aside the discouraging and terrible assumption of the dangers that might tempt virtue driven to despair. Let us only assume that an overly sensitive heart burns with an involuntary love for his friend's daughter or his wife, that with heaven that sees no part of it on one side, and himself who wants not to tell anyone anything about it on the other, he is free to enjoy her; that her charming figure adorned by all the attractions of beauty and voluptuousness attracts him; will this abstract image of virtue deny his heart the real object that strikes it at the very moment when his intoxicated senses are ready to yield to their pleasures? will it in that instant appear to him to be the more beautiful, will it wrest him out of his beloved's arms to [*1144*] devote himself to the vain contemplation of a specter he knows to be devoid of reality? Will he end up like Joseph, and leave his coat behind? No, Sir, he will close his eyes and succumb. The believer, you will say, will succumb as well. Yes, the weak man; the one who is writing to you, for example: but give both of them the same amount of force, and watch the difference which their fulcrum makes.

[23] How is one to resist violent temptations, Sir, when one can yield to them without fear by telling oneself: what is the good of resisting? In order to be virtuous, the philosopher needs to be so in the eyes of men; but the just man is strong enough under the eyes of God. He sets so little stock by this life and its goods and evils and all of its worldly glory! he perceives so much beyond! Invincible force of virtue, none knows you but the one who feels your whole being and who knows that it is not within men's power to dispose of it. Do you sometimes read Plato's *Republic*? Look up with how much energy Socrates's friend, whose name I have forgotten, depicts to him the just beset by the outrages of fortune and the injustices of men, defamed, persecuted, tormented, a prey to all the disgrace of crime while deserving all the rewards of virtue, already seeing death drawing nigh, and certain that the hatred of the wicked will not spare his

memory once they no longer have the power to harm his person. What a discouraging scene, if anything can discourage virtue. Socrates himself frightened, calls out, and believes he has to invoke the Gods before answering; but without the hope of another life, he would have answered poorly for this one. However, if everything should end for us with death, which cannot be if God is just and hence if he exists, even the mere idea of this existence would be for man an encouragement to virtue and a consolation in his miseries, which the person who, believing himself isolated in this universe, lacks for not feeling in the depths of his heart a confidant of his thoughts. It is at least one solace in adversity to have a witness to one's not having deserved it; it is a pride truly worthy of virtue to be able to say to God: You who read in my heart, you see that I use the freedom you have given me as a strong soul and a just man does. The true believer, who everywhere feels under the eternal eye, likes to do himself honor in the face of heaven by having fulfilled his duties on earth.

[*1145*] [24] You see that I have not taken issue with you about this simulacrum which you presented to me as the sole object of the wise man's virtues. But, my dear Sir, return to yourself now, and see how uncombinable, incompatible this object is with your principles. How can you fail to be sensible [to the fact] that this same law of necessity which, according to you, alone regulates how the world and all events proceed, also regulates all the actions of men, all the thoughts of their heads, all the sentiments of their hearts, that nothing is free, that all is forced, necessary, inevitable; that all the movements of man, directed by blind matter, depend on his will only because his will itself depends on necessity: that there are in consequence neither virtues nor vices, neither merit nor demerit, nor [any] morality in human conduct, and that for you the words honest man or scoundrel must be devoid of all sense? Yet they are not so, I am quite certain of it. For all of your arguments, your honest heart protests against your sad philosophy. You are sensible to the sentiment of freedom, to the charm of virtue in spite of yourself, and this is how on all sides this forceful and salutary voice of the internal sentiment recalls everyone whom his misguided reason leads astray to the bosom of truth and of virtue. Bless this holy and beneficent voice, Sir,

which returns you to the duties of man and which the fashionable philosophy would end up making you forget. Yield to your arguments only when you feel that they agree with the dictamen of your conscience, and whenever you feel that they contradict it, you may be sure that it is they that deceive you.

[25] Although I do not wish to quibble with you, nor to follow your two letters step by step, I can nevertheless not refrain from saying a word about the parallel between the Hebrew wise man and the Greek wise man. Being an admirer of the one as well as of the other I can scarcely be suspected of prejudice in speaking about them. I do not believe that the same is true of you. I am not greatly surprised that you give every advantage to the second. You have not become sufficiently acquainted with the other, and you have not taken sufficient care to disentangle what is truly his from what is foreign to him and disfigures him in your eyes, as it does in those of a good many other people who, [*1146*] in my view, have not examined this any more closely than have you. If Jesus had been born in Athens and Socrates in Jerusalem, if Plato and Xenophon had written the life of the first, and Luke and Matthew that of the other, you would speak very differently; and what discredits him in your mind is precisely what makes his loftiness of soul more astonishing and more admirable, namely, his birth in Judaea among perhaps the most abject people at that time, whereas Socrates, born among the most educated and agreeable people, found all the assistance he needed to ascend easily to the tone which he assumed. He rose up against the Sophists as Jesus did against the Priests, with this difference that Socrates often imitated his opponents, and that if his beautiful and fine death had not done honor to his life he would have been taken for a sophist like themselves. As for Jesus, the great flight his great soul took invariably raised him above all mortals, and from the age of twelve to the moment he expired in the most cruel as well as the most ignominious of all deaths he was never untrue to himself. His noble project was to raise up his people anew, once again to make it a free people and worthy of being free; for this is where the beginning had to be made. His profound study of the Law of Moses, his efforts to arouse enthusiasm and love for it in [his people's] hearts exhibited his aim as much as it was possible to do so in order not to frighten the Romans. But instead of heeding him

his abject and cowardly compatriots grew to hate him precisely because of his genius and his virtue which were a reproof to them for their worthlessness. In the end, it was only after he had seen how impossible it was to carry out his project that he expanded it in his head and, unable to make a revolution among his People by himself, he sought to make one in the Universe by his disciples. What prevented his succeeding in his first plan, besides the baseness of his people [who were] incapable of all virtue, was the excessive gentleness of his own character; a gentleness more like an angel's and a God's than a human being's, and which did not forsake him for an instant, even on the cross, and causes anyone to weep torrents of tears who is capable of reading his life as one ought to, through all the ado with which these poor folk disfigured it. Fortunately they respected and faithfully transcribed his speeches which they did not understand: discard a few oriental or poorly translated turns, there is not a word in them that is not worthy [*1147*] of him, and it is in this that one recognizes the divine man, who of such paltry disciples nevertheless made men who in their crude but proud enthusiasm were eloquent and courageous.

[26] You raise as an objection against me that he performed miracles. The objection would be terrible if it were just. But you know, Sir, or at least you could know that, according to me, Jesus, so far from having performed miracles, very positively declared that he would not perform any, and showed very great contempt for those who asked for them.

[27] How many things remain to be said! But this letter is enormous; it is time to end. This is the last time I will return to these matters. I wanted to oblige you, Sir, and I do not repent that I did; on the contrary. I thank you for having made me take up a thread of ideas that have almost faded, but the remains of which may be of some use to me in the state I am in.

[28] Adieu, Sir, do occasionally remember a man whom, so I flatter myself, you would have loved if you had known him better, and who concerned himself with you at a time when one is scarcely concerned with anyone other than oneself.
Renou

Letter to M. de Franquières (pages 277–290)

This letter has been edited by P.-M. Masson in his classical *La "Profession de foi du Vicaire savoyard"* (Librairie de l'Université, Fribourg, 1914), pp. 513–536; by Henri Gouhier for the Pléiade *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. IV, pp. 1133–1147; and by Ralph Leigh who faithfully reproduces Rousseau's spelling and punctuation, and identified the addressee as one Laurent Aymon de Franquières in his edition of Rousseau's *Correspondance complète*, vol. XXXVII, pp. 13–24.

Renou The warrant issued for Rousseau's arrest by the Parliament of Paris in 1762 was still in effect, and Rousseau had therefore been advised to go under an assumed name upon his return to France from England in 1768.

[5] **necessary motion, an expression of which . . . I have never made any sense.** It is a premise of the materialists, in contrast to the deists' premise which Rousseau says he adopts in [17] of this *Letter*, that God is required to impart motion to matter; Diderot speaks of "essential" motion in his *Pensées philosophiques* XVIII and XXI; the latter being the *pensée* which Rousseau repeatedly singles out as particularly important: see [11] below, with the editorial note. **a Clarke** Samuel Clarke (1675– 1729), disciple and friend of Newton's, he attacked materialism in the name of what he called the mathematical principles of philosophy, and in this connection he criticized Locke's speculation about thinking matter; in his *Discourses Concerning the Being and Attributes of God* (1706) he endeavored to prove the existence of God in as mathematical a manner "as the subject matter allows." **regardless of what Locke may say on the subject, the assumption of thinking matter is a genuine absurdity.** See Rousseau's *Letter to Voltaire* [8] and the Editorial Note; Rousseau returns to the problem of thinking matter in [13] below.

[8] **because they have no need of it.** i.e. of knowing God. The French is equivocal: it can equally well be read as saying "because they have no need of him," i.e. of God.

[9] ***Coeli enarrant*** "The heavens declare" the glory of God: *Psalm* 19.1.

[10] **the dictamen** inspiration **of your conscience** a common expression which Rousseau uses quite commonly.

[11] **Diogenes walk as his only reply to Zeno who denied motion** Rousseau considers this episode from a different point of view in *EOL* I[7]. **Bishop Berkeley . . . maintains that there are no bodies** Rousseau had made the same point in *FD* [57]. **the**

author of the *Pensées philosophiques* Diderot; Rousseau does not name him because Diderot had published the *Pensées* anonymously; he also discusses Diderot's materialist argument in his *Letter to Voltaire* [30].

[13] **You Epicurean, you make up the soul of subtle atoms**: Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* III, ll. 179, 206f., 209; Lucretius recognizes the difficulty to which Rousseau here calls attention: *ibid.* III, 176–257. **You Modernist, show me an organic molecule** The challenge is directed specifically at Buffon, who had formulated the theory of organic molecules to account for the generation of living beings in his *Histoire naturelle générale et particulière* (1749), especially chs. 2–4, Buffon *OP*, pp. 238b–256a; Rousseau's wording echoes Buffon's formulations.

[14] **When I examined all this closely** In *SD* I [19] and the *Letter to Voltaire* [8].

[16] **the likes of Fénelon, of Cato, of Socrates** Fénelon (1651–1715) wrote on education, politics, and religion. His *Adventures of Telemachus* served as one of the models for Rousseau's *Emile*. Although his defense of religious "quietism" brought him into conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities, he remained Archbishop of Cambrai. In his *Traité de l'existence et des attributs de Dieu* (I, 1) he discusses and rejects the Epicurean arguments about the origin of the visible universe which Rousseau mentions in the *Letter to Voltaire* [30], and again in the present *Letter* [11]. Rousseau consistently expressed great admiration for Fénelon. On Cato and Socrates, see especially *PE* [30] and the Introduction, p. 2.

[17] **I recall . . . meeting up . . . with this question of the origin of evil** . . . see especially the **Letter to Voltaire.**

[21] **Titus** (39–81), Emperor of Rome (79–81), **making the Roman people happy . . . might not waste a single day, and yet not be virtuous; he certainly was so in sending back Berenice.** He would say he had wasted his day if it went by without doing some good; see also *Discources: Last Reply* [57]*. He wanted to marry Berenice, the niece and widow of Herod, but did not marry her lest his doing so offend the Roman people; an action about which Racine and Corneille each wrote a tragedy. Rousseau discusses Racine's play in his *Letter to d'Alembert, OC* V, 48–50. **Brutus causing his children to be put to death may have been more than just. But Brutus was a tender father** See *Last Reply* [54]–[56] with the Editorial Note.

[22] **Will he end up like Joseph, and leave his coat?** When he fled the attempts by Potiphar's wife to seduce him: *Genesis* 39:12–20.

[23] **Do you sometimes read Plato's *Republic*? . . . Socrates's friend, whose name I have forgotten,** Glaucon, **depicts to him the just beset by the outrages of fortune and the injustices of men** . . . *Republic* II, 359b–362c. **Socrates** . . . **believes he has to invoke the Gods before answering;** he says it would be impious of him not to come to the assistance of justice: *Republic* II, 368b. **but without the hope of another life** – with which the *Republic* begins (328e–331b) and ends (608d–621d), but to which Socrates does not allude in the present context.

[25] **you give every advantage to the second.** Rousseau wrote "to the first"; all editors agree that this must have been a slip of the pen.

[26] **according to me, Jesus** . . . **very positively declared that he would not perform any [miracles]** Rousseau discusses and documents this claim most fully in *LM* III (*OC* III, 735–736); on miracles in general, see especially *SC* II 7[11].